

# **New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report**

**SAU 36**

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Jean Bergin, Special Education Director**

**Final Report**

**March 30, 2001**

**Visit Conducted on:  
November 16, 17, 2000**

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# **New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report**

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(Commendations, Citations and Suggestions for each school)

Note: *It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.*

# **New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report**

## **SAU 36**

### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted in SAU 36 comprised of the following schools: Whitefield Elementary, Lancaster Elementary, Dalton School, Jefferson Elementary and White Mountain Regional High School. The visiting team met on November 16 - 17, 2000 in order to review the status of Special Education services provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the special education director, building principals, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via telephone. Throughout the visit, the team had full cooperation from school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

### **II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted on November 14 - 15, 1994***

Based on a review of the previous program approval report, as well as a comprehensive look at district policies and procedures for the provision of special education services, the team determined that progress has been made in many of the previously identified areas of non-compliance throughout SAU 36. There are, however, several areas that continue to require attention, some due to the recent amendments to the federal requirements found in IDEA '97.

A number of specific issues of noncompliance cited in 1994 have been resolved. One such example is that the lack of professional staff certified in specific areas of Learning Disabilities or Emotional Disabilities is no longer an issue impacting the team composition at evaluation meetings. SAU 36 presently has a full range of certified staff that provides specific expertise to the special education processes.

The previous review team further noted a lack of consistency in paperwork that resulted in procedure inaccuracies throughout the SAU. While there are still several areas of noncompliance identified in each school, there is no evidence that a broad lack of understanding exists among the special education staff. The team found that most areas are in compliance, with exceptions based on the need to revise current special education forms to reflect the recent changes in federal regulations.

The need to provide professional development opportunities to staff was identified in 1994 and again during this visit. However, ongoing training is a general recommendation that speaks more to maintaining a knowledge base and skills in best practice and current trends, which provides for the provision of excellent programming.

Most importantly, the visiting team discovered a spirit of willingness and collaboration among the educators in SAU 36. The consensus among the team members is that the efforts currently made by all staff, including

administrators, regular and special educators and paraprofessionals results in very effective services and programming for all SAU 36's students.

### III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The visiting team found that the overall quality of education in SAU 36 is very good. There is a clear sense of collaboration and cooperation among all staff on behalf of providing the best possible services to all of the district's students. Further, the role the community plays at each SAU 36 school is strong. Parents and other community members are welcomed into schools and into the support and participation of various aspects of planning and programming. The team also found that administration (Superintendent, Director of Special Education, Curriculum Coordinator, Principals and Assistant Principals) take vital leadership roles in promoting excellence in the delivery of instruction, and in valuing the role and contribution of community in all aspects of educational programming and extracurricular activities.

The review team identified several issues of significance requiring attention. SAU 36 special education procedures need to be updated to reflect the recent amendments to the federal regulations under IDEA '97. This involves both the revision of forms and in related training on the various procedural changes. In varying degrees, schools would benefit from additional clerical support for the special education process. The extensive amount of time special education staff are required to spend to comply with all aspects of programming takes away from the time available to provide services to students. This is particularly evident at the high school.

Other issues identified by the team are related to improving the overall quality and effectiveness of IEPs developed for students with educational disabilities. The current IDEA '97 requirements and trend in practice around the state is to align the IEP's with the NH Curriculum Frameworks (and thus the district's curriculum) and provide clearly measurable goals with objectives benchmarked to match classroom instruction. The expanded role of the regular educator, the inclusion of information from the NHEIAP results, clearly written transition plans, explanation of the extent to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in regular classes, transfer of rights statement one year before age 18, and special factors required to receive FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education), should also be considered in the IEP development.

The number of students identified with educational disabilities in SAU 36 represents approximately 16% of the student population. This relatively high number of students requiring services presents a challenge to the special education department in particular as it means higher than usual caseloads and a proportional amount of clerical and procedural work. The district may want to create a long-range plan that considers providing an array of alternative supports to students outside of the special education process. It is important to note that such work is already evidenced in such efforts at the Student Support Center at the Whitefield Elementary School where all students can "drop in" for extra support with schoolwork, and in other efforts throughout the district.

In conclusion, the effort expended by all staff throughout SAU 36 in order to provide a quality educational experience for the community's children is commended. The community's commitment to their schools is clear, resulting in child centered and effective programming.

#### **IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:**

##### **SAU-WIDE**

##### **COMMENDATIONS:**

- Administration (Superintendent, Special Education Director, Curriculum Coordinator, building level administrators) is commended for their leadership role in the effective schools found in SAU 36. The sense of support, communication and community is felt throughout the SAU.
- The SAU is commended for creatively maximizing resources to accommodate the greatest needs and provide for services to the best possible extent.
- Staff throughout SAU 36 are commended for their professionalism and their spirit of collaboration resulting in effective inclusionary practices for all students.
- The parents/families of SAU 36 are applauded for their ongoing support of the schools.
- The elementary school facilities are well maintained and attractive.
- The planned improvements at the high school are commended.
- The ongoing curriculum efforts to align SAU 36 curriculum with the New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks is highly praised.
- The SAU 36 staff are commended for their efforts to provide high quality educational and extracurricular programming to all students.

##### **CITATIONS:**

(Please see individual school citations)

##### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- Review staffing patterns to determine if additional staff (professional and paraprofessional) are necessary to provide appropriate supports to students with educational disabilities.
- Consider the addition of clerical staff to assist in the necessary special education procedural requirements.
- Continue to plan for future technology needs in the areas of coordinated computer hardware and technology and relevant software programs to enhance the curriculum offerings.
- Consider distance-learning opportunities to extend the present available curriculum opportunities for students. Distance learning programs may also provide opportunities for staff and community members to gain advanced degrees or increase professional development offerings.
- Consider the expansion of the Preschool program to a second site within the SAU.
- Revise all special education forms to fully reflect the current state and federal requirements for the provision of services to students with educational disabilities.
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities to regular and special education staff in areas related to changes in IEDA '97, as well as other aspects of instructional best practices in education.

## SAU 36 PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

### **COMMENDATIONS:**

- The Preschool is a lively, friendly environment, where children seem happy and engaged.
- There are no visible indications of who is receiving special education services and who is not in the classrooms.
- Children who are not identified are able to ride the bus!
- Transition from preschool to kindergarten seems smooth and effective.
- School/home communication books are used daily for all children.
- There is a strong, well-developed preschool curriculum.
- The parent interviewed was thrilled with the program, as well as with her son's progress.
- The long waiting list of community children wanting to attend the program speaks to its success.
- The 50-50% ratio of children with disabilities and without is commended.

### **CITATIONS:**

#### **REFERRAL:** Ed. 1107.07(d)

Written notice to parents of disposition was not in evidence in file reviewed.

#### **NOTICE OF IEP MEETING:** CFR300.345(b)ii

The notice of IEP meeting does not include who is invited to the meeting.

#### **IEP DEVELOPMENT:** Ed. 1109.01(b) CFR300.347(20)

Annual goals not written as measurable.

#### **LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT:** Ed. 1115.06

Evidence that Least Restrictive Environment is determined annually and meets the criteria is not documented.

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- Consider ways to strengthen the connection and communication between the district and early intervention Family Centered Early Supports and Services.
- Consider further integration of speech/language therapy into the program through collaborative team model. Professional development sessions related to consultative/collaborative models may be beneficial.
- Seek professional development related to the development of writing measurable goals and objectives, including participation from parents and other team members, in IEP development.
- It may be time to consider expanding the preschool program to a second site, in order to maintain the ratios and provide programming to the number of students requiring the services.
- Opportunities for parents to get together with each other and their families can be a wonderful support.

<b>WHITEFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b>
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**PROGRAM(S) VISITED:** 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room 3) Student Support Center

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- Excellent utilization of the Student Support Center. Very appropriate use for both students with educational disabilities and students without disabilities.
- Regular education teacher expressed positive feeling toward full inclusion of students with disabilities and the no child is discriminated or segregated from general curriculum.
- Excellent communication between regular and special education staff. There are ongoing committees and staff meetings that allow for good communication.
- Excellent abilities of the Principal and Assistant Principal to foster cohesiveness between faculty members.
- The mentoring program for new teachers is commended.
- The school has a very warm, child centered and welcoming atmosphere.
- There is a clear element of respect in the school, among the whole school community.
- Teachers are professional and enthusiastic about the instruction they are offering and the school in general.

**CITATIONS:**

**DETERMINATION OF DISABILITY:** Ed. 1107.07(c)

Teacher in area of suspected disability not present at meeting to determine eligibility.

**IEP COMPONENTS** Ed. 1109.01(c)(d)(f) CFR300.347 a(4)(5)(7)

IEP's missing components, including: statement of special education, related services and supplementary aids; explanation of the extent to which the child will not participate with non-disabled students in regular classes; statement of student participation in general curriculum, participation in extracurricular activities with non-disabled children; State-wide or district-wide assessments of student achievement modifications in the administration of the tests, if needed; transition statement; projected dates and duration of services; and how the progress toward annual goals will be measured and how parents will be informed.

**LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT:** Ed. 1115.06, CFR300.552

No evidence that Least Restrictive Environment is determined annually.

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION:** Ed. 1111.01 CFR300.307

No statement of physical education including: opportunity to participate and specially designed PE, if necessary.

**TEAM COMPOSITION:** Ed. 1109.03 CFR300.344

LEA Representative is not identified at meetings for Evaluations, Determination of Eligibility, IEP and Placement.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- It appears that some of the errors identified in the record review were a result of clerical errors/omissions. Retraining and review of the process related to all special education procedures may alleviate such oversights.
- IEP's should be attached in one document and not filed as separate pages.
- Aligning Goals and Objectives with the New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks will serve to develop IEP's that are relevant to classroom curriculum and instruction.
- All staff should be writing goals and objectives in the same manner, including related service providers.
- Provide professional development opportunities for regular and special education staff to update on changes in IDEA '97 as well as best practices for inclusionary programming, including creating appropriate modifications.
- Staff indicated a wish for more individual space for working with students and to protect confidentiality.



- Staff also indicated a need to have more time for regular and special education staff to meet and plan and a wish for paraprofessionals to be available for each regular education classroom.

## LANCASTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

### **COMMENDATIONS:**

- There is clear community support of and involvement in the Lancaster Elementary School.
- The mentoring and support for new teachers is commended.
- All staff are child focused and committed to improvement.
- Parents are extremely happy with the school and programs.
- Students are receiving good programming and supports at the school.
- Communication between special and regular educators is excellent.
- Communication with parents occurs frequently.
- The special education referral form is very comprehensive.

### **CITATIONS:** (in numerical order)

#### **REFERRAL:** Ed. 1107.02(b)(d)

File lacking written notice of referral and written notice of disposition of referral.

#### **EVALUATIONS:** Ed. 1107.03

Evaluation not complete; evaluations not conducted within 45 days and no extension indicated.

#### Ed. 1107.07(3) Ed. 1109.03 CFR300.344(d)

LEA Representative not identified at Evaluation, Determination of Eligibility, IEP and Placement meetings.

#### **NOTICE OF MEETING:** CFR300.345(b)(l)

No evidence of who is invited to IEP meeting.

#### **IEP COMPONENTS:** Ed. 1109.01 (a)(b)(c)(d)(f)(g)(j)

IEP's missing the following components: how disability affects involvement and progress in general curriculum; measurable annual goals with benchmarks or objectives; extent to which child will participate in regular class and expectation of regular class participation; statement of special education, related services and supplementary aids and services provided to child and program modifications or supports to personnel...to advance toward the goals, be involved in general curriculum, participate in extracurricular activities and be educated with non-disabled children; projected dates and duration of services; frequency and location of services; statement of how child is progressing toward regular curriculum; and identification of individual responsible for implementing IEP; indication that State or District-wide testing results were considered.

#### **PROGRESS:** CFR300.347(a)(7)

There is no evidence in file of progress on IEP annual goals reported to parents.

#### **PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS:** CFR300.504(a)(2)

Procedural safeguards not given with notification of each IEP meeting.

#### **LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT:** Ed. 1115.06 CFR300.552

No evidence that Least Restrictive Environment is determined annually and meets criteria.

<b>LANCASTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Continued</b>
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**PLACEMENT:** Ed. 1125.04(3-4)

Written consent for placement not located.

**EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR:** Ed. 1111.01

No evidence that Extended School Year was considered.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- Review and revise special education forms and provide professional development opportunities to all staff in areas of recent changes to state and federal regulations.
- Provide professional development opportunities to staff in methods of writing measurable IEP goals and objectives that are aligned with NH Curriculum Frameworks and classroom instruction.
- Consider the possibility of providing a special education coordinator to the school to assist in the administration of special education procedures.

<b>DALTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b>
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Name of Program(s) Visited: Resource Room and Modified Regular Programs

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- There is good community support for the Dalton Elementary School.
- There is a good atmosphere in the school.
- The regular education staff are knowledgeable about their students' needs and are very inclusive in practice.
- There is very good communication between all staff working with a child.
- The school secretary does a good job of providing clerical and other supports to the special education programs.
- The special education files are well organized.

**CITATIONS:** (in numerical order)

**EVALUATIONS:** Ed. 1107.08(e) Ed. 1107.07(c) CFR300.543(b) CFR300.534(a)(2)

LD evaluation, summary report and determination of disability not signed by team members as being in agreement. (Members only sign as being present) No evidence in file that parents got or are given a copy of the evaluation report.

**PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS:** Ed. 1109.04 CFR300.504(a)(2)

No evidence that procedural safeguards are given with each notice of an IEP meeting.

**IEP DEVELOPMENT:** Ed. 1109.01(g) CFR300.437(a)(g) CFR300.346(a)(l)iii  
Ed. 1111.01 CFR300.309(a) CFR300.307(b)(c)

IEP's missing projected start and duration of services; evidence that NHEIAP results were considered in IEP development; Extended School Year consideration ; evidence of participation in regular physical education or adaptive physical education, if necessary.

**LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT** Ed. 1115.06 CFR300.552

No evidence that Least Restrictive Environment is determined annually and meets criteria.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- Redesign forms used for special education procedures, along with training in the correct application of the process, will be helpful in addressing the issues of noncompliance.

## JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Name of Program(s) Visited: 1)Resource Room 2)Modified Regular Programs

### **COMMENDATIONS:**

- The regular education staff are knowledgeable about student's need and are very accepting of including them in general curriculum.
- There is good communication among all staff regarding student needs.
- There is a warm, child-centered atmosphere in the school.
- The special education files are well organized.
- There is good community support for the school
- The school support staff (secretary, nurse, etc.) are good supports to the special education programs.

### **CITATIONS:**

**EVALUATIONS:** Ed. 1107.08(e) Ed. 1107.07(c) CFR300.543(b) CFR300.534(a)(2)

LD evaluation, summary report and determination of disability not signed by team members as being in agreement. (Members only sign as being present) No evidence in file that parents got or are given a copy of the evaluation report.

**PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS:** Ed. 1109.04 CFR300.504(a)(2)

No evidence that procedural safeguards are given with each notice of an IEP meeting.

**IEP DEVELOPMENT:** Ed. 1109.01(g) CFR300.437(a)(g) CFR300.346(a)(l)iii  
Ed. 1111.01 CFR300.309(a) CFR300.307(b)(c)

IEP's missing projected start and duration of services; evidence that NHEIAP results were considered in IEP development; Extended School Year consideration ; evidence of participation in regular physical education or adaptive physical education, if necessary.

**LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT:** Ed. 1115.06 CFR300.552

No evidence that Least Restrictive Environment is determined annually and meets criteria.

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- Redesign forms used for special education procedures, along with training in the correct application of the process, will be helpful in addressing the issues of noncompliance.

## WHITE MOUNTAIN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Name of Program(s) Visited: 1) Resource Room program 2) Modified Regular program  
3) Vocational programs (STEP, JROTC, Culinary Arts)

### COMMENDATIONS:

- High level of interpersonal collaboration and case management between administrators, regular educators, vocational educators and special educators.
- Very good pro-active procedures for assuring students with educational disabilities receive services needed.
- Special education staff work very hard and are highly regarded by their colleagues.
- Weekly meetings for students at risk and core team for students who are failing, are an effective method of addressing student needs.
- The atmosphere in the school is very warm, inviting and student centered. This community school is an active place to be during school hours and continues to provide an impressive program of after school opportunities. Students appear happy and engaged in a wide variety of curriculum and extracurricular activities.
- The ROTC program appears to be a successful component for students.

### CITATIONS:

**PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS** Ed. 1109.04 CFR300.504(a)(2)

No evidence that procedural safeguards are given with each notice of an IEP meeting.

**EVALUATIONS:** Ed. 1107.05(k) Ed. 1107.07(c) CFR300.534(c)(l)

Evaluation not conducted within 45 days and no extension signed; no evidence of evaluation completed prior to discharge.

**NOTICE OF IEP MEETING:** Ed. 1109.04 CFR30.345(b)(2)

Notice does not indicate that the purpose to develop a statement of transition services.

**VOCATIONAL COMPONENT** Ed. 1109.01(e) CFR300.342(a)(2)ii

IEP does not include a vocational component.

**IEP DEVELOPMENT:** Ed. 1109.01(f)(j) Ed. 1109.03(c) CFR300.347(a)(6)  
CFR300.344(b)(2) CFR300.347(a)(4) CFR300.347(c)  
CFR300.347(b)(1)

IEP's do not include a statement of the special education, related services and supplementary aids and services provided to the child and program modifications or supports for personnel; individuals responsible for implementing; no transition statement; no record to ensure that students interests were taken into account; explanation of the extent to which the child will participate with non-disabled children in regular classes; NHEIAP consideration; statement of how parents will be informed of their child's progress; transfer of rights statement.

### SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider a way to provide clerical support to the special education staff and programs to assist with the extensive paperwork, correspondence, and other requirements.
- Consider a way to reduce the case loads and class size
- There is a need for additional technology, specifically more computers and relevant software programs
- Continue efforts in the area of long range planning to make building improvements to the high school facility.

OUT OF DISTRICT
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**COMMENDATIONS:**

- The Out of District Files are well maintained by the Special Education Director.

**CITATIONS:****NOTICE OF IEP MEETING:** Ed. 1109.04(a)(d)

The notice of the IEP meeting does not include that a purpose is to develop a statement of transition services (for students age 14 or 15), invite the student. For students age 16 or older, indicate that the purpose is to consider the needed transition services, etc.

**IEP Components:** Ed. 1109.01(l)(m)

The IEP does not include transition plan. NHEIAP results not considered in the development of IEP.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- Revise SAU special education forms to fully reflect the changes in state and federal regulations regarding the provision of services to students with educational disabilities.

# **ADDENDUM**

## **JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM**

### **SAU 36**

#### **Student File Review**

#### **Case Study Document**

#### **Reimbursement Claim Form**

#### **Case Study Addendum Form**



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADDENDUM</b> <b>JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</b></p>
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**SAU 36**

There are presently no students who fall under the James O. Consent Decree within SAU 36.